

THE
OCCASIONAL PREACHER.

NUMBER VI.

OF
FIXED PIETY:
OR, THE
FEAR of GOD
IN
ADVANCED LIFE.

A SERMON Preach'd at a *Thursday Lecture*.

Psal. cxix. 38. — *Thy servant who is devoted to thy fear.*

Isaiah xxxiii. 6. — *The fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

Prov. xiv. 36. *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.*

Jerem. xxxii. 40. *I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not [or will not] depart from me.*

II Cor. vii. 1. — *Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

L O N D O N:

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REV. OF GOD



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

2000

T H E
Occasional Preacher.

Number VI.

Of *Fixed Piety* : Or the Fear of God
in advanced Life.

1 Kings XVIII. 12. last Clause.

[Second Sermon.]

—“ I, thy Servant, fear the
“ LORD from my Youth.”

HAVING considered the history to which these words relate, in a former discourse ; from thence was shew'd, the reason of *Obadiab's* making this declaration concerning himself, and also what is imported in his *fearing* the Lord. This fear was shewn to be no mean or slavish thing ; no gloomy or melancholy thing, where rightly understood ; and it is far from being a cowardly thing ; or a matter to be ashamed of, on any account. Hereupon the fear of God was specially recommended to such as are in the days of their youth.

II. I now proceed to shew what instances and proofs, of the fear of the Lord, we have in the life of *Obadiab*.

As he began to be religious very *early*, so it is recorded of him, that he feared the LORD

greatly *. That religion which begun betimes, we find continued in an advanced state, and rose to a very eminent degree. A powerful motive and argument, this, to engage young persons to fear God in the *beginning* of their days. They that apply themselves diligently to any art, or science, or business in the world, while they have the advantages of youth on their side, are generally most considerable, and most successful in their after improvements; and this makes way for their promotion amongst men. In like manner early application of the mind to the fear of God and to the thoughts of religion, generally produceth more eminent and exemplary piety and virtue in the after parts of life. They who make it their first and chief study to honour God, are most signally owned and honoured by him. He hath ordered it to stand upon record, “ Them that honour me
 “ I will honour, and they that despise me
 “ shall be lightly esteemed †.”

I don't say this is *always* visibly the case, but it is *generally* so. There are many sad instances of such as begin well, who are afterwards hindered or perverted by evil company, and sinful pleasures, or by the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this life: But it is most commonly otherwise, where God is signally honoured in the prime of life.

* Ver. 3. before the text.

† 1 Sam. ii. 20.

There are some endowments which men have from the God of *nature*, that distinguish them from one another, in almost every thing to which they apply their thoughts and labours. And when men of such distinguish'd abilities, go into studies or affairs different from those which they first followed, and which they have a genius more suited to, they may greatly exceed those that have kept to one and the same thing from their youth. So also there are special gifts from the God of *grace*, and such extraordinary instances and operations of a divine spirit, as greatly distinguish some men from others in matters of religion, and in the kingdom of Christ. Under such distinguishing influences of the spirit of revelation, a man may become very eminent for piety and virtue, though not so early engaged that way as might be wished. But these *extraordinary cases* do by no means invalidate what I have said, of men's improvements being generally most considerable, both in the affairs of the world and in matters of religion, when they are observed to apply themselves to one or other of these from their youth.

This will appear from the example of *Obadiah*, in many very instructive proofs and evidences, to be the consequence of fearing God betimes. In the consideration of which we may spend the present time much to our benefit and advantage, if it be not our own fault.

The

The name *Obadiab* we meet with frequently in Scripture ^a. It is a name read very differently ^b. The Seventy render it *Abdias*. The signification of it is, A servant of the Lord. Thus in a very eminent and distinguishing sense, the *Obadiab* speaking in our text was a servant of GOD : One that worshipped him in private, and in his *own house*, when no such thing was publickly tolerated in the kingdom of *Israel*. He was a man of great *business*; but yet a very *good* man in the midst of it all. Therefore his example may recommend the

^a The son of *Uzzi*, one of the chief men of the tribe of *Issachar*, was called by this name ^{*}. We have another of this name of the race of *Saul*, one of the sons of *Azel* [†]. Another we read of in the tribe of *Gad*, a man of great valour [‡]. We find one of this name also in the account of the posterity of *David* [§]. Another of the family of the *Levites* ^{*}. And there is also an *Obadiab* who sealed the covenant with *Nehemiah* [†]. And one *Obadiab* is amongst the minor Prophets. But the *Obadiab* spoken of in our text was a person different from all these. He was wholly employed in *civil affairs*; unless we should suppose he was one of the princes sent by *Jehoshaphat* to teach in the cities of *Judah* [‡], which is not at all likely; because *Jehoshaphat* king of *Judah* strengthened himself against *Israel*. And the context tells us, that *Obadiab* was steward of the household to the king of *Israel*; and therefore could not be supposed to be employed by them both, though it be said that *Jehoshaphat* joined affinity with *Ahab* : For *Jehoshaphat* sent the *Obadiab* that was in his court, with those other princes to teach in the cities of *Judah*, in the third year of his reign : Whereas his affinity with *Ahab* and going down to the court of *Samarita*, is not mentioned till many years after.

^b Some read it *Hobadjabu* and *Obdia*, and *Abdiah*.

^{*} 1 Chron. vii. 3.

[†] Ibid. viii. 38.

[‡] xii. 9.

[§] iii. 21.

^{*} Ibid. ix. 16.

[†] Neh. x. 5.

[‡] 2 Chron. xvii. 7.

fear of the Lord in advanced life on the following accounts.

1. He plainly shewed that his *religious fear* and service *was matter of choice*. This had his judgment and his heart.

In the time of childhood and youth, there is often a compliance with superiors and instructors, so far, that where the fear of God is taught by such, there is an appearance of it put on ; but this may be *merely* to please them, while under their care and power. We too often see, that as soon as these instructors or parents are dead, or if before that an opportunity offers to get from under their eye, and out of their reach, the young disciples soon shew that they had no regard to religion, but what may be called force, and the prejudices of education. Yea sometimes they prove more scandalous, in casting off the fear of God, than others who have no teaching besides that of nature, and no law but that which is written upon their hearts. *Obadiab* was not one of these, who fear the Lord only whilst they are young ; but from the time of his first solemn acknowledgments of God, and acquainting himself with his laws, and the institutions of his worship, he speaks like one that had kept to the statutes of revealed religion, in all the after conduct of his life. Religion had his youthful affections. His choice was determined and fixed early ; and it still prevailed

prevailed as his judgment ripened, and so he became more and more eminent in the practice of it. Though it is not to be expected (however it may be wished) that the young man's affections, and the aged person's judgment and experience, should go together in the worship and service of God; yet they may both be consecrated to the purposes of religion in different ways, and in the different ages of life. Where religion is truly matter of choice, and the heart is engaged in it, this will be the case of *youth* to consecrate it's best and most vigorous affections to religious purposes: And age, with all its wisdom, prudence, and settled experience, will no less serve and honour the Lord.

It may further be observed here, that youth is the *imitating* age; and, with some, their religion itself is no more than an appearance, and an imitating of others. However, it is better to affect an imitation of them that fear God, than to be apes of the manners and fashions of those that affect profaneness, and that throw contempt on every thing sacred.

While the imagination is lively, and apt to take impressions from another, active tempers are easily carried into an imitation of what strikes, whether it be from what is represented in a strong and moving manner to the ears, or to the eyes. From hence may arise an affectation of religion, as well as of some other things in many young people, without having a
right

right knowledge of one or t'other. Fancy may act it's part for a time, as if there was a real sense of the things of God. But it is very frequent and common, in cases of this nature, for religion to be cast off amongst other childish things. And it is talked of by some such deserters of it, as if it was the weakest of all their childish fancies, when reason and judgment come to have greater power, in forming their tempers and lives, to serve the interests and designs of this world, than to adorn their profession of religion. Whereas the example in our text was such, as to carry the fear of the Lord into the most thoughtful employments, and into the most important station of life ; which proves, beyond all doubt, that the fear of God was not a perishing fancy, but a lasting reality founded upon such a choice as no changes in life could alter. This will be shewn, in the sequel of this discourse, from the temptations of high prosperity, as well as grievous persecutions, that tried the piety and virtue of this great good man. Let it be considered,

2. That his fear of the Lord was publicly evidenced, by his *approved virtue*, in the business and affairs of life. By his *justice, fidelity, industry*, and *care*, in discharging the trust that was reposed in him.

He did not pretend religion and the fear of God, so as to excuse his obedience to his

B

Prince ;

Prince ; or so as to make him negligent in the affairs that were committed to him. He did not set his devotion, and the rules of piety, in the place of justice and mercy ; much less did he make unrighteousness and tyranny to be supported, by a pretext of promoting the fear of God. The high esteem which *Ahab* had for this steward of his household, notwithstanding his utter dislike of him on account of his religion, plainly shews, that in the management of the affairs committed to him he was a man of more than common integrity, as well as of great abilities. When *Ahab* was resolved to search the land *himself*, that he might find out the moist and fruitful places, there to feed the cattle which remained, after many of them were dead ; he does not trust to any of his other servants, lest by presents, or intreaties, or by some managements of the people, they should be corrupted to pass by some lands, or by violence should seize upon others, contrary to his design : Yet he entrusts *Obadiab*, relying on his fidelity and diligence with as great satisfaction, as if he himself was to see things with his own eyes. “ They
 “ divided the land between them ; *Ahab*
 “ went one way with his attendants, and *Oba-*
 “ *diab* went another way with his *.” This circumstance, of having so great a trust reposed in him, by one who was most violently set against his way of religion and to have that

* Ver. 6. of the chapter where our text is.

trust *especially* committed to him, which must certainly be on account of his known integrity, and those virtues that made him peculiarly useful in all publick affairs, shewed that the King reckoned himself as secure in *Obadiab's* management, as if he was present every where to take account of things, and to order them himself; and this at a time, when he was in the greatest distress, and most racked with distrust and fear. Here we have very strong proof of the justice, faithfulness, care and diligence of *Obadiab*; and to every unprejudiced mind, this must recommend the *principle* from whence so much virtue arose, and by which it was maintained and supported. He that was in a manner *alone* a faithful worshipper of God in the court of *Ahab*, was *alone* also in the trust reposed in him by his Prince.

A remarkable instance of this nature we have in a another good man, whose *fidelity* is connected with a distinguishing *fear* of God; I mean *Hananiah* the ruler of the palace, of whom *Nehemiah* saith, "That he " was a *faithful* man and *feared* God *." He that fears God greatly, will not in any thing act unfaithfully with his fellow-creatures. Where the fear of God is a reasonable thing, and such as to be a governing principle, it will teach men to do justly, and to love mercy, as well as to walk humbly with their God.

* Nehem. vii. 2.

3. This fear of God, thus evidenced, was maintained in a station of the highest power and advancement.

Obadiab was prime minister of state to the King of *Israel*. He was governor of his house *, or Lord high steward, being set over the household and all the affairs of it ; probably having the treasure and yearly revenues of the King under his direction also. In this station he had great opportunities for corruption, and he had as strong temptations as can well be imagined. *Ahab* was exceedingly wicked and covetous. Poor *Naboth* was murdered that the King might seize upon his vineyard. The Queen was a great promoter of sensual mirth and revellings, together with all manner of vice and tyranny, " Let thine heart " be merry," says she to the King, while she sent letters to promote *cruelty*, *perjury*, and *murder* †. The whole court appeared to be then perfectly under the direction and power of these reigning vices. And therefore the vilest acts of injustice and murder are no sooner ordered, but they were executed. The Prophets of the Lord were sacrificed to this *Isabel*, or *Jezabel*, who had a table for four hundred Prophets of the groves, that would support her in her wickedness ; verse the 19th of the chapter where our text is. And such a devoted creature was *Ahab* to his own vices,

* V. 3. before the text.

† 1 Kings xxi. 7, 8, 9.
and

and the vices of this woman, that he is said
 “ to sell himself to work wickedness in the
 “ sight of the Lord, whom *Jezabel* his wife
 “ stirred up *.” What a noble instance and
 proof then of the fear of God was it, for
 one of the great men in this court, under
 all these provocations and excitements to ini-
 quity, yet to keep clear of it? When he was
 by his place obliged, continually to be in the
 way of seeing and knowing the evils that
 were practised and avowed, yet to preserve
 his piety and virtue untainted, how great
 was this! “ I, thy servant, fear the Lord
 “ from my youth.” “ Whatever iniquities
 “ my station may expose me to (as if he had
 “ said) and how generally soever wickedness
 “ prevails in all about me, yet do not think I
 “ am like the rest of *Ahab’s* courtiers, because
 “ his favour is continued to me, and greater
 “ than to others †. This is not owing to a
 “ compliance with his idolatries or vices, but
 “ to the peculiar providence of that God,
 “ whose fear I have maintained in the midst
 “ of the greatest temptations, and provocations
 “ to have utterly given it up.”

Not that this man stood *alone* in maintain-
 ing the fear of God, and the true religion,
 in the whole kingdom of *Israel*. This was
 not the case, though he was singular amongst
 men of power and authority, and those of

* 1 Kings xxi. 25.

† *Noli me putare talem esse quales ceteri Aulae nostrae.* Grot.
 his

his own rank at that time. There were seven thousand, beside him, that had not bowed the knee to *Baal*; but they were hid, and their names not known, nor their persons exposed, as was the person of this great man. His fear of God was great beyond theirs; that he could stand his ground in so high and eminent a station, when the wickedness of all about him was become so very great, as to make him a mark for all their envy and their reproaches continually to shoot at. But this leads me to add,

4. That *Obadiab* shew'd and proved his fear of God, in the *most dangerous and persecuting times*.

He did not only resist the temptations of grandeur, and the allurements of a court, but he was unmoved by the spirit of *persecution*, and stood firm against reproaches and insults.

There was something doubtless very extraordinary in the case of this good man, that he should be able to keep his post, and to have the favour and trust of a persecuting tyrant, and yet to keep a good conscience in adhering to those very principles for which others were put to death. Indeed there was no law in those times to restrain a King from making use of what servants he should judge most proper, though they did not conform to the worship of the court. No man

was excluded from the service of his King and country because he could not, in matters of religion, comply with the public edicts. *Ahab* was not obliged to lose, or give up a man of such excellent qualities, as were found in *Obadiab*, because he maintained different sentiments from himself in the matters of his God. And *Obadiab* was not obliged to quit his high station, whilst he could there be an example of the fear of God to others, and an instrument of saving the lives of such as adhered to the worship of the great *Jehovah*.

But how came it to pass, that a man of so much piety and virtue could satisfy himself, to continue in the midst of so much iniquity and idolatry, as must doubtless be a grievous affliction to him from day to day?—Perhaps he was under some obligations to *Ahab*, that would not admit of his quitting the station he was in. Such, that he might look upon his estate and his body as the King's; but yet his conscience, and the sentiments of his heart, in things belonging to God, were not under any human jurisdiction. Besides, he had such marks of the special favour and esteem of his Prince, that he might hope to mitigate his persecuting rage and fury by degrees; at least that he might be an instrument of preserving some from ruin and death that were exposed to it. And therefore he will rather bear all the uneasiness that he was exposed to himself, in maintaining the fear of God where it was treated

treated with hatred and contempt, than leave idolatry, and persecution, fully to reign and ravage, without any publick testimony against them. He would not leave those few, who were then in a most weak and helpless state, to be utterly cut off, by their having no one person in the court of *Ahab* to appear for them. It is thought by some, that God dispensed with *Obadiab's* not going up to *Jerusalem* to worship, as his law required ; that he might not break with *Ahab* by going directly contrary to a law of his, which obliged the King's subjects not to desert his kingdom upon a pretence of worship. And *Ahab*, on the other hand, dispensed with *Obadiab's* not attending the worship of the groves and the high places, because he knew how greatly he feared the God of *Jacob* their rightful Lord. For the preservation of others he must keep his place ; and yet, as a witness for God, he must keep to the worship of him alone, in the midst of hatred and reproach. This was a noble proof of that piety and religious fear of which our text speaks.—But it deserves to be considered as a *distinct head*, that

5. His fear of God was shewn by his *beneficence and care of good men*, in opposition to *persecuting statutes* and edicts, unrighteously oppressing such as adhered to the worship of the great Jehovah.

That

That God, for the sake of mercy, here dispensed with the sacrifices and services, which *Obadiab* should have attended in the temple, is entirely agreeable to the declarations of the Prophets, as well as to the reason of things, for his promoting a greater good.

In the verse after the text it is recorded, that when *Jezabel* slew the Prophets of the Lord, *Obadiab* hid an *hundred* of them, by fifty and fifty, in a cave. And notwithstanding the famine and drought prevailed, so that bread and water were hard to come by ; and much harder to be conveyed, without one or other discovering and seizing them, when carried in such quantities as to sustain fifty together ; yet this was managed so, as not only to *hide*, but to *feed*, the Prophets that were rescued from death, *with bread and water*.

Fidelity to the King did not oblige *Obadiab* to destroy that *humanity*, which is the great law of nature, *viz.* Mercy to the distressed and injured. When rulers turn persecutors, it is beneficence and goodness, it is an act of obedience to a greater law than that of any monarch upon earth, to shelter and keep alive and provide for the injured and oppressed. In this, *Obadiab* gave very convincing evidence of his being governed more by the fear of God, than by the will and authority of his Prince.

In the last place, his fear of G O D was manifested in the great *respect shewn to Elijah*; and in obeying an *order* and *revelation* from G O D, delivered by *Elijah*.

He that had been a protector and father to the young Prophets, bows with all the veneration and respect of a *son* before the old Prophet. As *Obadiab* was in the way, behold *Elijah* met him; and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said,—“ Art thou that
“ my Lord *Elijah*? And he said, I am *Eli-*
“ *jab* :” But as for the title of Lord, apply it to him who is indeed thy Lord and King.
“ Go tell thy Lord, behold *Elijah* is here *.” This order at first greatly terrified and afflicted *Obadiab*. He, being under great apprehensions of the dreadful consequence of going to *Ahab* with such a message, pleads several very important things to make the Prophet desist from urging it, or so much as repeating it †. But when *Elijah* insists upon it, in the name of the Lord of Hosts; and by that name which is above every name, engageth to meet the King of *Israel*, notwithstanding his present violent resentment; *Obadiab* with the readiest obedience hastens to *Ahab*, quitting all his own surmises and fears, and depending upon G O D to glorify himself, and his own word, and his faithful servants in the event. Here was such an honour done to a divine

* See the sermon foregoing, num. V. p. 6. † Ibid. p. 7, 8.
revelation,

revelation, and to a *Prophet* of the Lord, as shewed that a messenger and message from God, was to be regarded more than the *wrath* of a *King*, though he should fall into the greatest violence. But he knew also, that the "*hearts* of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and he can turn them as the rivers of waters *." Thus was the fear of God evidenced by *Obadiab's* turning back from the progress, upon which the King had sent him, to comply with a revelation from heaven, and to bring the King himself to meet the Prophet of the Lord. Now the "fear of the Lord was his *strong confidence*."

The wonderful consequences of this interview, between *Ahab* and *Elijah*, are to be considered as the reward of a steady fear of God, and obedience to his word. *Jehovah* appear'd in a very glorious manner, to honour them that now honoured him ; and in so doing, to bring the greatest shame and confusion upon those that despised him, and had rejected his worship. [This will be enlarg'd in with some other things, if God give leave, in another discourse.]

Let us here seriously review those instances and proofs of the fear of the LORD, that we have in the example of *Obadiab* ; and let us engage ourselves, allowing for different times and circumstances, to copy after them.

* Prov. xxi. 1.

1. Let me engage you that are young to *study the sacred oracles*, and the *fear of God* there described, for yourselves.

Do not satisfy yourselves in the matters of your God, by complying with the instructions and orders of superiors merely, without considering the reason of the hope and fear you see in them. If you find that the God of your fathers is God indeed, the living and true God, the most perfect Being, and the most merciful, powerful Saviour, then avouch him for your God : And do it with an heart entirely yielded to him, and determined to abide with him. Do not despise the counsels and good examples of superiors. To raise contempt of such, is one method by which ' the God of this world works in the children of disobedience.' But yet do not take things purely on the report and word of others. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, and see whether the things they have taught you, and related to you, be so or not : And endeavour to get an experimental knowledge and sense of every thing that will admit such evidence. Go to Jesus Christ that you may have *life* added to instruction, and that he may communicate his spirit to you, that you may be enabled to discern those things which are spiritually discerned ; and that you may come to know in whom you believe, so as to shew the deep and powerful effects of religion,

gion, upon your own souls, to such as converse with you.

Do not place your religion in mere *imitation* of others, however well and movingly they may manage in their devotions, or in their conversation about it. You should not indeed despise such helps, as are apt to excite and work upon the imagination : For this power and faculty is of God, and hath often been the instrument and means of great good, as well as of great vanity and folly. But do not let the fear of God lie only in the imagination, or in those things which are the effect of some powerfully excited passion. Take care to use your affections and imaginations while they are most impressive and lively, so as to carry the great matters of religion to the heart and judgment ; and there let every thing be tried and settled. According to a sound mind, let your choice be fixed to cleave to the Lord, and to his ways and service ; fixed with so firm a purpose and resolution, that no changes in this world may be able to destroy.

2. Let your fear of God be carried into *all the actions of life*, and to *every relative capacity*.

When tempted to any unjust, unmerciful, and evil speeches or actions toward any person, ask yourselves, “ Is such language and
“ such behaviour consistent with the true fear
“ of

“ of the Lord ?” When loose companions would entice you to profane the Lord’s day, or any part of it, and to turn your backs upon the worshipping assemblies, say, “ Is this to act like one that has a due reverence for God, and a respect to all his ordinances and institutions ?” Again, if you are solicited to take part in any lewd unrighteous actions ; or in any strife, envy, and tumults ; or in rebellion against lawful authority ; or in any intemperance, or idleness, and neglects of your own business ; say, “ How can one that fears his God do this and the other thing, which God’s law doth expressly warn me against ?” If sin takes advantage from interest, from numbers, from secrecy, or from any thing else that would give it a power over us ; we should be the more watchful against a sin thus favourably circumstanced. A sense of our duty will engage us to set all these things aside, with the iniquities they would recommend, when we find there is danger of their overpowering the fear of God in our hearts.

This should also quicken us to every pious and good work, to consider that the God we fear and serve is kind and merciful, to accept our good endeavours ; and he is equally willing and able to assist, and to succeed them. As works of righteousness, goodness, and truth, are his delight, so in the pursuit of these things as his word directs, we need to fear

no dangers or oppositions. He that could protect an *Obadiab* in the house of *Ahab*, and amidst the most prevailing powerful wickedness and abominations, is able to support, and deliver, and prosper, all such as maintain the fear of God in those stations, where by divine providence they are placed.

Whatever business we are employed in, and whatever relation we are called to fill up, the fear of God, (who is the disposer of our lot) should teach us to carry it well, and with great integrity. We should exercise an unwearied care to suit ourselves to our condition, and to every part of our duty. This religious fear of Deity (as was shewn before) made *Obadiab* a faithful steward. He was a good servant, not to a gentle and kind master, but even to one that was very violent and wicked. His religious fear made him also careful to use all his power and interest, for the good of his fellow subjects, and for the support of the oppressed in times of persecution and famine. This is the advantage and happiness of them that fear God *from* their youth, that they are in many respects habitually formed for usefulness and goodness.

3. Let no *advancement in life* destroy or lessen your fear of God.

All honour, and acceptance, and promotion, are of God. They come neither from the east nor west, from one quarter or another, with-

out a superintending providence. " But GOD is
 " the judge, he pulleth down one, and setteth
 " up another *." In the writings of *Moses*
 the Scripture expressly requireth, " Thou
 " shalt remember the Lord thy GOD, for it is
 " he that giveth thee power to get wealth †." He gives that skill and contrivance, those opportunities and incidencies, that health and acceptance, to which all owe their prosperity. Therefore the respect and reverence, which is due to GOD, should be kept up in the highest advancements that men can arrive at in this world. When *David* was tempted in some scene of his prosperity, to say, that he should *never be moved*; when he thought every thing was settled in such a manner as that (through the favour of GOD) all his troubles were come to an end, or in his words, " that his mountain stood strong;" then was he brought very soon to acknowledge before GOD, " Thou
 " didst hide thy face, and I was troubled ‡." It is by the fear of GOD, and a due regard to him, that we rightly use and enjoy what he bestows. And it is his providence that secures our blessings to us. Therefore in the close of *David's* life he delivers up the kingdom to *Solomon*, with this acknowledgment to GOD, " Thine is the kingdom, O Lord!
 " both riches and honour come of thee, and

* Psal. lxxv. 6, 7.
 xxx. 6, 7.

† Deut. viii. 18.

‡ Psal.

“ thou reignest over all, and in thy hand is
 “ power and might, &c.*”

Besides, we are accountable to God for all. And we are but tenants at will ; stewards that he may call to an account whenever he pleaseth. Therefore let our stations in life be ever so much to our advantage, let our talents be multiplied and encreased in one way or other, there is still as much reason for maintaining the fear of God in higher, as in lower circumstances : Yea, so much the more, as we have more to lose, and more to answer for, than they that are entrusted with less.

4. Let no *evil examples*, nor any *oppositions*, and *reproaches*, to which the fear of God may expose us, ever make us cast it off.

When infidelity, sensuality, and all manner of iniquities abound, an entire *withdrawment* is better than to keep profane and vicious company. Or if we cannot wholly withdraw from all that seek to corrupt us, or to make us uneasy with reproaches in the things of our God, we should still own our principles, and abide by them. When a contempt of the word and worship of God, and of pious good people, is spirited up to such a degree, that men cast the most grievous reproaches on such as profess to maintain a religious fear, we should then more stedfastly adhere to it ; and as we have opportunity and fit occasions

* 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.

for doing so, we should glory in it. Though we had lived in a *persecuting* reign, violent as that of *Ahab* was, or as those were in which some of our ancestors lived in this kingdom, yet we ought to copy after the examples of them that feared God rather than men, let their power and rage be ever so great. But when we have none to hinder our religious services, none to make us sin by *compulsion*, upon any public laws and edicts, it would be *inexcusable* in us to give up the fear of God to any of those lesser temptations that are in our day.

The wickedness and profaneness of our times is indeed very great, on account both of the *kinds* and the *number* of transgressors: But however they may tempt or insult us, they cannot force us into their ways, nor hinder our worshipping God, and standing up for him against the workers of iniquity, by any pretext of power and authority. We may express our fear of God in all places, and at all times, as far as we can find in our hearts to do this. And surely, if it was so fixed in our youth, and from our youth, as we have heard it was with the good man in our text, we shall be ready to evidence it and to promote it, in spite of all oppositions and discouragements.

5. The fear of God should produce *acts of kindness and mercy* to such as are in want,

or that labour under any *injury* and *oppression*.

The fear of God should not only engage us to stand our ground against all *persecution* and the *fear* of men, but it should put us upon all acts of *mercy* and *kindness* to those that are used ill on account of their religion. God hath declared himself to be the patron of the helpless, and the judge of the fatherless, when the men of the earth oppress them *. And therefore a true fear of him will make us also take their part, and do all we can to encourage, support, and help them. We shall not only be content to secure *ourselves*, but to provide, as far as our power and ability reaches, for the preservation and support of *others*. *Obadiab* did not satisfy himself in maintaining his own post, but he hid, and fed, the persecuted Prophets of the Lord. The laws of justice, humanity, and compassion, are certainly *prior* and *superior* to all persecuting laws; whether they are formed only by the will of the Prince, or by numbers of men combining and concurring with him. Therefore every man that truly fears God will rather imitate and obey him, than fall in with any of those laws that the pride and wrath of *men* shall set up in opposition to the laws of God. There will be more force and weight, to those that truly consider things, in copying after that account of God in one of

* Psal. x. 18.

the Psalms *, than in all the commands and examples of men where they go contrary to the divine proceedings ; because all these shall be overthrown. “ The Lord executeth judgment for the oppressed, giveth food to the hungry, and looseth the prisoners : The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind, raiseth up those that are bowed down, and he loveth the righteous : The Lord preserveth the strangers ; he relieveth the fatherless and widow : But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.”

Finally, our fear of God should keep up that veneration and respect to every messenger, and message from him, that though we should walk in darkness and under the greatest discouragements, yet we should “ trust in the name of the Lord, and obey the voice of his servants †.” Thus we should commit ourselves to him in well doing, as unto a faithful *Creator*, and as those that are well assured his loving kindness is better than life. And may God, of his infinite mercy, enable us thus to do, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen,

* Psal. cxlvi. 7, 8, 9.

† Isaiah l. 10.



F I N I S.

